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18 September 1985**PERSPECTIVES
ON THE
WORLD**
By Edward Neilan**India vs. Pakistan
—No end in sight**

Prime Minister ~~Rajiv Gandhi~~ appears to be stepping up his campaign to instruct American diplomatic officials in the fine points of the Indian martial art of Pakistan-bashing.

In recent weeks, Indian criticism of Pakistan — and urgings that Washington do something about the complaints — have escalated on two issues. One is the question of Pakistan's alleged nuclear buildup, and the other is Indian insistence that Pakistan is harboring and training Sikh dissidents inside Pakistan for attacks and terrorism across the border in India.

Pakistan denies both charges and has hinted broadly that New Delhi ought to mind its own business and not meddle in Pakistani internal affairs.

The latest bout occurred Monday in New Delhi when India asked representatives of a visiting U.S. delegation to prevent Pakistan from using its nuclear program to produce atomic weapons.

Indian Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari made the request in discussions with Assistant Secretary of State Michael H. Armacost and Donald Fortier, the third-ranking official in the National Security Council.

Mr. Bhandari told the visiting officials the United States could play a major role in monitoring the Pakistani nuclear program and stopping it from making weapons.

U.S. officials said the delegation, also scheduled to visit Pakistan, was dispatched to register American concern at a potential nuclear arms race developing between the two South Asian neighbors.

India exploded a nuclear device in 1974 and says it has not produced a deliverable nuclear weapon. But Mr. Gandhi has said apparent Pakistani efforts to produce nuclear weapons have forced his government to begin reconsidering the question.

Last year, intelligence analysts in Washington warned that India might be tempted to launch a pre-emptive strike at Pakistani nuclear facilities if it believed Pakistan was close to producing a nuclear bomb.

Over the weekend, Pakistan said it would "retaliate with all available resources" if its nuclear center just outside Islamabad were attacked.

On Friday, Pakistan Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Zain Noorani said it was regrettable that in violation of the Pakistan-India agreement to avoid hostile propaganda, the official All-India Radio was disseminating "concocted allegations" about Sikh training camps in Pakistan.

One story was a statement by officials of India's Punjab state of a "so-called confession" by a person in police custody that Sikhs were being trained in Pakistan. Another story concerned an allegation by Indian Home Minister S. B. Chavan about the so-called training camps for Sikhs in Pakistan.

Mr. Noorani quoted an editorial in the Indian Express: "Given the well-known brutality of Indian Punjab police and their regular resort to torture, the confession is bound to be viewed rather cynically. Accusations of a foreign hand are often convenient to cover up incompetence or failure."

Such allegations, Mr. Noorani added, were "unfortunate" because they could spoil the atmosphere needed to improve Pakistani-India relations. Pakistan, he said, had "gone out of its way to encourage the establishment of good neighborly relations."

Mr. Noorani said objective observers were aware that the problems in the Indian Punjab were indigenous and had been aggravated by India's military action to quell Sikh dissidents in 1984 at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Attempts to blame Pakistan were part of tactics to externalize the problem.

Addressing the Pakistan National Assembly on the nuclear question, Mr. Noorani said the real threat of nuclear proliferation emanated from India, which possessed a considerable stockpile of weapons-grade plutonium outside international inspection and safeguards regulations.

Pakistan's position, dating back to a 1978 proposal by that nation's president, is that India and Pakistan should reciprocally inspect each other's nuclear facilities, renounce the manufacture and acquisition of nuclear weapons and endorse a Pakistani proposal to establish a nuclear-free zone in South Asia. Pakistan has repeated these proposals on a number of occasions, but there has been no response from India.

It is in the interest of the United States to contain the spread of nuclear weapons but, realistically, it is difficult to impinge on a nation's sovereign right to make its own choice.

Speaking in Amritsar Monday from behind a bullet-proof shield and wearing a bulky bulletproof vest, Prime Minister Gandhi urged people to "tackle the plague of terrorism" by voting in next week's state elections.

The 41-year-old prime minister was flanked by commandos as he addressed about 75,000 people at three widely separated rallies. Indian security officials claim Mr. Gandhi is on a Sikh assassination list.

As always, tranquility and political calm are elusive goals on the subcontinent.

Edward Neilan is foreign editor of The Times.